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Vaccinations rise in some states with soaring infections

By H. HOLLINGSWORTH and
R. ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Associated Press

Vaccinations are beginning to rise in some states where COVID-19 cases are soaring, White House officials said Thursday, and hospitals are running out of space because of the delta variant, which is "spreading with incredible efficiency." Coronavirus coordinator Jeff Zients told reporters that several states with the highest proportions of new infections have seen residents get vaccinated at higher rates than the nation as a whole. Officials cited Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Missouri, and Nevada as examples. "The fourth surge is real, and the numbers are quite frightening at the moment," Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said on a New Orleans

radio show. Edwards, a Democrat, added: "There's no doubt that we are going in the wrong direction, and we're going there in a hurry." Louisiana reported 2,843 new COVID-19 cases Thursday, a day after reporting 5,388 — the third-highest level since the pandemic began. Hospitalizations are up steeply in the last month, from 242 on June 19 to 913 in the latest report. Fifteen new deaths were reported Thursday.

Just 36% of Louisiana's population is fully vaccinated, state health department data shows. Nationally, 56.3% of Americans have received at least one dose of the vaccine, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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4TH WAVE

Rochelle Walensky, Director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), left, and Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, listen during a Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing, Tuesday, July 20, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

Associated Press



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Vaccinations rise in some states with soaring infections

Continued from Front

Aly Neel, a spokesperson for Louisiana's health department, said the state has seen "a little bump" in vaccinations recently, adding that details would be available Friday. Warner Thomas, president and CEO of Ochsner Health, said the system had seen a 10% to 15% increase in people seeking vaccination over the past week or two. In Missouri, which is second only to Arkansas and Louisiana in the number of new cases per capita over the past 14 days, officials have rolled out a vaccine incentive program that includes \$10,000 prizes for 900 lottery winners. The state lags about 10 percentage points behind the national average for people who have received at least one shot.

Hospitals in the Springfield area are under strain, reaching pandemic high and near pandemic high numbers of patients. "Younger, relatively healthy and unvaccinated. If this describes you, please con-



Rochelle Walensky, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), listens during a Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee hearing, Tuesday, July 20, 2021, on Capitol Hill in Washington.

sider vaccination," tweeted Erik Frederick, chief administrative officer of Mercy Hospital Springfield, noting that half of the COVID-19 patients are ages 21 to 59 and just 2% of that group is vaccinated.

The surge that began in the southwest part of the state, where some counties have vaccination rates in the teens, has started to spread to the Kansas City area, including at Research Medical Center.

"I don't want to keep putting my life on the line just because people don't want to get vaccinated or listen to what health care professionals are recommending," lamented Pascaline Muhindura, a registered nurse who has worked on the hospital's COVID-19 unit for more than a year.

"A lot of them don't even believe in COVID-19 to begin with. It is incredibly frustrating. You are helping someone that doesn't even believe that the illness that they have is real," Muhindura said.

Dr. Jason Wilson, an emergency physician with Tampa General Hospital, also has watched the rise in cases with frustration. Unlike earlier in the pandemic, when many patients were in their 70s, he has seen the median patient age fall to the mid-40s.

"I spent a lot of time this fall and last summer saying, 'We've got to do these things, these social mitigation strategies until we get that vaccine. Just hang in there,'" Wilson said.

Hospitals initially were hopeful as cases declined. But then, he said, "Things just fell flat."

In conservative Utah, hospitals also are filling up again

as the virus surges among the unvaccinated. On Wednesday, the state recorded its highest number of people hospitalized due to COVID-19 in five months. State health officials renewed their pleas for residents to get vaccinated as Utah intensive care units reached 81.5% capacity. There are 295 people who are hospitalized due to the virus in the state, the highest since February.

"This delta at the moment it is honing in on largely unvaccinated persons," said Dr. William Schaffner, a professor of infectious diseases in the health policy department at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville.

The variant, which originated in India, now accounts for an estimated 83% of coronavirus samples genetically identified in the U.S. It is the predominant strain in every region of the country and continues "spreading with incredible efficiency," the director of the CDC, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, told reporters at the White House. She said the mutation is more aggressive and much more transmissible, calling it "one of the most infectious respiratory viruses we know of."

"We are yet at another pivotal moment in this pandemic," she warned. "We need to come together as one nation."

The CDC has not changed its guidance that vaccinated people do not need to wear masks. But in Georgia, Atlanta Public Schools announced Thursday that it will implement a "universal mask wearing" policy in all of the system's school buildings when fall classes begin. Just 18% of eligible students in the Atlanta school system are fully vaccinated and 58% of its employees have said they are either fully vaccinated or plan to be, officials said.

"Given our low vaccination rates and increasing community spread, the CDC acknowledges that universal masking would be appropriate," the school system said in the statement. □



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Garland: To help combat gun violence, confirm ATF leader

By MICHAEL BALSAMO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Merrick Garland said Thursday he hoped the Senate would confirm the head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, to help front the federal effort against gun violence.

The nomination of David Chipman has been stalled as Republicans and the National Rifle Association work to sink it. Chipman is a two-decade veteran of the ATF who served as an adviser to a major gun control group and would be the first formal leader since 2015.

"As you all know, ATF is on the front lines of our efforts to battle gun violence," Garland said during a visit to the agency's headquarters. "We are very hopeful that the Senate will soon act."

Garland and Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco met with agents before traveling to Chicago to launch an effort there and in four other cities to reduce spiking gun violence by addressing illegal trafficking and prosecuting offenses that help put guns in the hands of criminals.

The effort will include stepped-up enforcement in so-called supply areas — cities and states where it's easier to obtain firearms and which are later traf-



In this June 25, 2021 file photo, Attorney General Merrick Garland speaks during a news conference at the Department of Justice in Washington.

ficked into other cities with more restrictive gun laws. It will also include New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Washington.

"We all know our job is to go after those who pull the trigger," Monaco said outside ATF. "... But our job is also of course to go after the sources of those guns, the corridors that they travel in and the networks that feed those guns to the places where they are doing the most violent crime and that is what this series of strike force efforts is all about."

Besides prioritizing gun crimes, the strike forces will

embrace intelligence sharing and prosecutions across jurisdictions, Justice Department officials said. Authorities have also embedded federal agents in homicide units of police departments across the U.S., have been deploying additional crime analysts and are conducting fugitive sweeps to arrest people who have outstanding state and federal warrants for violent crimes. Violent crimes, particularly homicides and shootings, are up in many cities around the country, and the Biden administration has sought to aid communities hamstrung by violence.

But the initiative begun this week differs from other recent federal efforts to address violence, because it is not sending agents or prosecutors into cities with crime spikes. Justice officials say the strike forces are targeted prosecutions meant to be a longer-term effort to combat gun trafficking.

There is no federal gun trafficking law, so federal agents often must rely on other statutes, like lying on a firearms purchase form, to prosecute gun trafficking cases or stop straw purchasers, people who buy weapons legally to then

provide them to others who can't legally have them. Officials hope the new plan will mean federal prosecutors in some of the supply cities will be more likely to bring charges in those cases.

But if the effort sounds familiar, it is. In 2017, Chicago police, federal agents and prosecutors launched a similar initiative — the Chicago Crime Gun Strike Force — to try to stem the flow of illegal firearms in the city and curb rampant gun violence.

The Justice Department said that strike force was formed in response to a surge in firearm violence and its work is continuing, but it has been focused locally in Chicago on reducing violence and not on gun trafficking from other jurisdictions that put the guns in the hands of criminals.

That's been the case with similar gun task forces, too, including in New York.

"These previous approaches generally surged resources to specific areas, without a sustained focus on cross-jurisdictional trafficking," the department said. "Now we are formalizing and standardizing coordination between districts. This strategy is focused on trafficking — keeping firearms out of the hands of those who will pull the trigger." □

Associated Press

Dems renew questions about FBI background check of Kavanaugh

BY ERIC TUCKER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats are raising new concerns about the thoroughness of the FBI's background investigation into Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh after the FBI revealed that it had received thousands of tips and had provided "all relevant" ones to the White House counsel's office.

FBI Director Christopher Wray, responding to longstanding questions from Democrats, disclosed in a letter late last month that it had received more than 4,500 tips as it investigated

the nominee's past following his 2018 nomination by President Donald Trump. The process was the first time that the FBI had set up a tip line for a nominee undergoing Senate confirmation, Wray said.

A group of Democratic senators said in a letter to Wray dated Wednesday that his response "raises significant additional questions."

They called on him to explain, among other things, how many tips the FBI decided were relevant and what criteria agents used to make that decision and what policies and procedures were used to vet the

tips.

The senators also asked for more information about the tip line, including how it was staffed and how the tips were recorded or preserved.

"Your letter confirms that the FBI's tip line was a departure from past practice and that the FBI was politically constrained by the Trump White House," the senators wrote.

Kavanaugh was confirmed to the Supreme Court in October 2018 after a rancorous confirmation process in which claims emerged that he had sexually assaulted women three decades



In this Oct. 8, 2018, file photo, Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh stands before a ceremonial swearing-in in the East Room of the White House in Washington.

Associated Press

ago. He emphatically denied the allegations. □

Mississippi brief: Supreme Court should overturn Roe v. Wade

By **EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS**

Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court should overturn its landmark 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide and should let states decide whether to regulate abortion before a fetus can survive outside the womb, the office of Mississippi's Republican attorney general argued in papers filed with the high court on Thursday.

"Under the Constitution, may a State prohibit elective abortions before viability? Yes. Why? Because nothing in constitutional text, structure, history, or tradition supports a right to abortion," Mississippi Attorney General Lynn Fitch and four of her attorneys wrote in the brief.

The arguments are a direct challenge to the central finding of the court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision and its 1992 decision in a Pennsylvania abortion case. Both rulings said states may not put an "undue burden" on abortion before viability. The Mississippi attorneys argue that the rulings are "egregiously wrong." The Mississippi case is the first big abortion-rights test in a Supreme Court reshaped with three conservative justices nominated by former President Donald Trump.

A 6-3 conservative majority, with the three Trump nominees, said in May that the court would consider argu-



In this May 19, 2021, file photo, the Jackson Women's Health Organization clinic, more commonly known as "The Pink House," is shrouded with a black tarp so that its clients may enter in privacy in Jackson, Miss. In this May 19, 2021, file photo, the Jackson Women's Health Organization clinic, more commonly known as "The Pink House," is shrouded with a black tarp so that its clients may enter in privacy in Jackson, Miss.

Associated Press

ments over a Mississippi law that would ban abortion at 15 weeks. Justices are likely to hear the case this fall and could rule on it in the spring. Abortion rights supporters have said that if justices uphold the Mississippi law, that could clear the way for states to enact more restrictions on the procedure, including bans on abortion once a fetal heartbeat is detected, as early as six weeks.

"Restrictions on abortion care disproportionately harm people who already face significant barriers to accessing health care — particularly Black, Indige-

nous, and people of color and people having difficulty making ends meet," the Center for Reproductive Rights, which is defending Mississippi's only abortion clinic in its challenge of the 15-week ban, said in a statement Thursday.

"If *Roe* falls, states hostile to abortion rights could move to ban abortion entirely, and the impact will fall hardest on the same people," the center said.

Republican lawmakers in several states have been pushing laws designed to challenge *Roe v. Wade*. A federal district judge on Tuesday blocked an Ar-

kansas law that would ban most abortions, ruling that the law is "categorically unconstitutional" because it would ban the procedure before the fetus is considered viable.

The Mississippi 15-week law was enacted in 2018, but was blocked after a federal court challenge. The state's only abortion clinic, Jackson Women's Health Organization, remains open and offers abortions up to 16 weeks of pregnancy. Clinic director Shannon Brewer has said about 10% of its abortions there are done after the 15th week. More than 90% of abortions

in the U.S. take place in the first 13 weeks of pregnancy, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The Mississippi clinic has presented evidence that viability is impossible at 15 weeks, and an appeals court said that the state "conceded that it had identified no medical evidence that a fetus would be viable at 15 weeks." Viability occurs roughly at 24 weeks, the point at which babies are more likely to survive.

Mississippi argues that viability is an arbitrary standard that doesn't take sufficient account of the state's interest in regulating abortion.

The Mississippi law would allow exceptions to the 15-week ban in cases of medical emergency or severe fetal abnormality. Doctors found in violation of the ban would face mandatory suspension or revocation of their medical license.

"That law rationally furthers valid interests in protecting unborn life, women's health, and the medical profession's integrity. It is therefore constitutional," the Mississippi attorney general's office wrote in its Thursday filing.

The attorney who will make Mississippi's oral arguments before the Supreme Court is the state solicitor general, Scott G. Stewart, a former clerk for Justice Clarence Thomas. □

South Dakota court orders sharing of crash victim's records

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A judge overseeing the crimi-



In this Sept. 9, 2019, file photo, South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg, joined by a bipartisan group of state attorneys general, speaks to reporters in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington.

Associated Press

nal trial of South Dakota Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg has ordered medical providers to turn over their health records for the pedestrian who was struck and killed by Ravnsborg last year.

This week, retired Circuit Court Judge John Brown issued letters to several hospitals and clinics, ordering them to provide records about Joe Boever's psychiatric state.

The order comes after Ravnsborg's defense alleged in court documents that Boever's Sept. 12

death may have been a suicide.

Investigators say Ravnsborg was distracted and swerved out of his lane when he was driving on Highway 14 near Highmore when he struck and killed Boever, a 55-year-old who was walking along the highway with a flashlight. Ravnsborg faces three misdemeanor charges of careless driving, use of an electronic device while driving and illegal lane change. Earlier this month, Ravnsborg's attorneys filed a motion alleging that a

pattern of alcoholism and prescription drug abuse by Boever that caused at least one family member, a cousin, to believe that a depressed Boever killed himself by jumping in front of Ravnsborg's car.

According to the *Argus Leader*, Brown ordered five health care facilities to turn over Boever's psychiatric and psychology records. Brown sent letters Tuesday to the Human Services Center, the state's public psychiatry hospital in Yankton, as well as Avera St. Mary's Hospital in Pierre. □

Unilever chief says company 'fully committed' to Israel

By JOSEF FEDERMAN

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The chief executive of Unilever on Thursday said the global consumer goods giant remains "fully committed" to doing business in Israel, distancing himself from this week's announcement by the company's Ben & Jerry's ice cream brand to stop serving Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and contested east Jerusalem.

But CEO Alan Jope gave no indication that Unilever would force Ben & Jerry's to roll back its controversial decision.

The Ben & Jerry's announcement is one of the strongest steps by a well-known company against Israel's settlements, which are widely seen by the international community as illegal. The Israeli government has condemned the decision, accusing the company of joining a Palestinian-led boycott campaign against Israel. It has urged 35 American states with anti-boycott laws to punish Unilever.

In a conference call with investors, Jope said that Ben & Jerry's, which has a long history of social activism, had made the decision on its own.

He noted that under its purchase agreement with Ben & Jerry's in 2000, the iconic ice cream company maintained broad independence over its social justice



In this Tuesday, July 20, 2021 file photo, an Israeli shops at the Ben & Jerry's ice-cream factory in the Be'er Tuvia Industrial area, southern Israel.

policies and that Unilever respected that arrangement.

"Obviously it's a complex and sensitive matter that elicits very strong feelings," he said. "If there is one message I want to underscore in this call, it's that Unilever remains fully committed to our business in Israel."

That includes a new 35 million euro (\$41 million) razor factory, corporate offices and facilities that employ some 2,000 people, hundreds of millions of dollars of investment and support for "social programs," he said. He said "it is not our intent" to regularly delve into such sensitive matters.

"It's been a longstanding

issue for Ben & Jerry's," he said. "We were aware of this decision by the brand and its independent board, but it's certainly not our intention that every quarter will have one quite as fiery as this one."

It remained unclear whether his comments would calm the uproar in Israel. The country's new prime minister, Naftali Bennett, said earlier this week that he had spoken to Jope about what he called a "clearly anti-Israel step."

Bennett, a former leader of the West Bank settlement movement, said Thursday that Israel would "use the tools at its disposal including legal on this issue" and

that those boycotting Israel "need to know that there will be a price to pay."

In its announcement, Ben & Jerry's said it would step selling ice cream in the occupied West Bank and contested east Jerusalem, saying such sales were "inconsistent with our values." The company's factory is in southern Israel, not in a settlement, meaning that it is targeting consumers, as opposed to a production facility.

Israel annexed east Jerusalem after the 1967 war and considers the area part of its undivided capital. It says the West Bank is disputed territory whose fate should be resolved in peace talks.

But the international community widely sees both areas as occupied territory and considers the settlements, home to some 700,000 Israelis, as illegal under international law.

In its statement, Ben & Jerry's sought to differentiate between Israel and occupied lands, saying it would continue to produce ice cream inside Israel through a "different arrangement." But it gave no further details and said it would end its production agreement with its long-time Israeli licensee at the end of next year.

Separating Israel and its settlements will be difficult. Israeli supermarket chains, a main distribution channel for Ben & Jerry's, operate in the settlements. Israeli law also prevents local companies from boycotting the settlements.

Israel does not differentiate between the settlements and the rest of its territory. When home-rental company Airbnb announced in 2018 that it would no longer list properties in West Bank settlements, Israel harshly condemned the move and eventually pressured the company into canceling the decision.

Israel's ambassador to the United States and United Nations, Gilad Erdan, this week sent a letter to the governors of 35 U.S. states urging them to punish Unilever under anti-boycott laws. □

Associated Press

Gaza City blast kills 1, injures 10, shakes crowded area

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip

(AP) — An explosion tore through a house in a popular market in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, killing one person and wounding 10, the Palestinian territory's interior ministry said. It was not immediately clear what caused the explosion.

The blast in the Al-Zawiya area collapsed large parts of the house and damaged dozens of buildings and shops nearby, according to the statement. Explosives engineering

teams were investigating; civil defense teams and the police were able to control the ensuing fire.

The blast shook the neighborhood on the third day of Eid al-Adha, a Muslim holiday.

The Israeli army signaled it wasn't involved, calling the explosion an "internal" matter in Gaza.

Gaza City is already struggling with heavy damage sustained from an 11-day war in May between Israel and Gaza's militant Hamas rulers.

At least 254 people were killed in Gaza during the conflict, including 67 children and 39 women, according to the Gaza health ministry. Hamas has acknowledged the deaths of 80 militants.

Twelve civilians, including two children, were killed in Israel, along with one soldier.

The World Bank earlier this month said rebuilding Gaza would cost \$485 million, including up to \$380 million to repair the physical damage alone. □



Palestinian rescuers and security personnel inspect the site of an explosion as a mechanical digger works to remove rubble, in Gaza City, Gaza, Thursday, July 22, 2021.

Associated Press

U.S., S. Korea say they'll push North to return to nuke talks

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM**

Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) —

Top U.S. and South Korean officials agreed Thursday to try to convince North Korea to return to talks on its nuclear program, which Pyongyang has insisted it won't do in protest of what it calls U.S. hostility.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman was in Seoul as part of her regional tour that will take her to China this weekend. She'll be the highest-ranking U.S. official to visit China since President Joe Biden took office in January.

On Thursday, she met South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong for talks on North Korea, the military alliance between Seoul and Washington and other regional issues.

The two decided to continue close consultations to get North Korea to return to talks and agreed dialogue is essential to the complete denuclearization and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, Chung's ministry said in a statement. During her separate meeting with President Moon Jae-in later Thursday, Sherman said she hopes North Korea will soon respond to a U.S. offer for dialogue.



U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman bumps elbows with South Korean Foreign Minister Chung Eui-yong prior to their meeting at Foreign Ministry in Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, July 22, 2021.

She said she wants to have in-depth talks on North Korea with Chinese officials when she visits the northeastern Chinese city of Tianjin on Sunday, Moon's office said.

While there are questions about its influence on North Korea, China is still North Korea's last major ally and economic pipeline. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said earlier this month he'll

further upgrade his country's ties with China, as he's struggling to overcome deepening pandemic-caused economic shocks. U.S.-led diplomacy aimed at stripping North Korea of its nuclear program in return for economic and political benefits has been stalled for about 2 ½ years. A major sticking point is North Korea's calls for the United States to abandon

policy Pyongyang considers hostile an apparent reference to punishing U.S.-led sanctions imposed over its past nuclear and missile tests.

Last month, Kim's influential sister, Kim Yo Jong, dismissed prospects for a restart of the nuclear diplomacy, saying U.S. expectations of talks would "plunge them into a greater disappointment." After her

statement, Kim Jong Un's foreign minister said North Korea wasn't even considering the possibility of any contact with the Americans, noting it "would get us nowhere, only taking up precious time."

The blunt back-to-back statements have dampened hopes that were raised when Kim said North Korea was ready for both dialogue and confrontation though more for confrontation.

Some experts say North Korea will likely find the urgent need to return to talks if its current pandemic-related economic difficulties further worsen.

Also during Thursday's meeting, Chung asked Sherman to strive to bolster the South Korean-U.S. alliance. Sherman responded she would do so, saying the alliance is key to peace, security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and Northeast Asia, according to the statement.

Sherman also met South Korean presidential national security director Suh Hoon to discuss ways to restart U.S.-North Korea diplomacy and other stalled talks between the two Koreas, the South Korean presidential office said. □

Associated Press

Zimbabweans deported by Britain arrive at Harare airport

By **FARAI MUTSAKA**

Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) —

Zimbabwe has received the first batch of dozens of its citizens being deported from Britain, some after staying in that country for decades and forced to leave families behind to face an uncertain future back home.

Rights groups and politicians in Britain had mounted pressure to stop the deportations, arguing that the deportees are at risk of persecution in Zimbabwe. The first group of deported Zimbabweans was people convicted of committing crimes in Britain.

The United Kingdom says it has a right to deport

foreigners who commit serious crimes after they serve out their sentences. Zimbabwean authorities dismissed fears that the

returnees would be persecuted.

On Thursday, 14 of the deportees arrived at the main airport in the capital,



A Zimbabwean National Centre, is escorted to the bus by a police officer upon arrival at Robert Mugabe International airport in Harare, Thursday, July 22, 2021.

Associated Press

Harare, and were quickly put into waiting buses to go to a quarantine center where they will stay for 10 days before they can rejoin their families.

The first flight was supposed to carry 50 passengers classified as "foreign national offenders," but the deportations of some were postponed because of a COVID-19 outbreak at a detention center and ongoing legal processes, said Livit Mugejo, spokesman for Zimbabwe's ministry of foreign affairs.

"Some were isolated and could not travel. Others lodged last-minute appeals arguing that they were supposed to be deported five years ago and

that their circumstances have now changed so the courts there agreed to hear their cases," he said.

"The deportations are ongoing. It's only that the U.K. had temporarily halted them at some point but deportations are not unique. Some of these people committed crimes such as murder and rape so the U.K. or any other country has a right to deport them," he said. He said, as an example, more than 200 Zimbabweans were deported from neighboring South Africa and Botswana last week. Distraught relatives waited outside the Harare airport Thursday but were not able to meet the deportees. □

Cuba: US protest narrative paving way for military incursion

By ANDREA RODRIGUEZ

Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba criticized the United States and President Joe Biden on Wednesday for a series of statements by senior officials after the unprecedented protests on the island last week, accusing the U.S. government of seeking to justify a military intervention.

Johana Tablada, deputy director for U.S. affairs at Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said U.S. officials are painting a false picture of the situation in Cuba, which is struggling with severe economic problems amid a surge in coronavirus infections.

"There is a Walt Disney narrative of a bad government and people fighting for their freedom stereotypes that scare anyone who has never set foot in Cuba, because of their arrogance and disregard for the truth," Tablada said in an interview with The Associated Press.

"They are very interested in fabricating an alternative reality because the riots of July 11 weren't enough to justify the war that is being waged on us," she added. Communicating via social networks, thousands of Cubans took to the streets July 11 in various parts of the country to voice complaints over power cuts, long lines at stores, shortages of goods and rising prices, while some called for changes in the government.

The protests ended in acts of vandalism, destruction of patrol cars, stone throwing at hospitals and looting. There were also violent arrests of protesters by the police, witnessed by AP, and according to authorities one death.

Officials have not released a list of prisoners, but Human Rights Watch said in a reported Wednesday that about 500 had been arrested.

The day before, Col. Víctor Alvarez at the Ministry of the Interior said that some detainees had been released when there wasn't enough evidence to prove



Special forces police patrol the streets as they drive past a large Cuban flag hanging from the facade of a building, in Havana, Cuba, Wednesday, July 21, 2021.

Associated Press

they participated in protests, but others were being processed by the judicial system.

He did not give any numbers or other details.

The protests were the largest in more than two decades, while groups of government supporters also took to the streets, including tens of thousands on Saturday.

Authorities suspended cell-phone internet data service on the island, charging that a campaign orchestrated from the United States used robot messaging on Twitter and other social media to instigate the demonstrations.

A petition on the Change.org platform created by a citizen in Belgium asking for the U.S. government to invade Cuba has been signed by almost 500,000 people, and some Florida politicians have raised such an action as a possibility.

Tablada said that while there are no current U.S. military movements aimed at Cuba, there are signs of extreme aggressiveness, such as those that led to an interventions in Libya and Iraq.

"We are at a time when discourse has deteriorated to unprecedented levels," she said.

"From the Biden government in regards to Cuba, we have seen parading several times a day, every day since July 11, senior

United States officials saying things that are not true"

about Cuba.

Biden promised during his

election campaign that he would resume President Barack Obama's policy of rapprochement with the island, but after entering the White House, he kept in place all the toughened sanctions imposed by President Donald Trump, including adding Cuba's government to a list of sponsors of terrorism.

The White House has said a working group has been told to review the U.S. policy blocking Cuban Americans from sending money to Cuba but to ensure that the Cuban government does not serve as intermediary in the flow of cash. Washington says it is also considering increasing the staff at its embassy in Havana to facilitate the participation of civil society. □

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'Dinner under the Stars' at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa: Unforgettable, that's what you are!

EAGLE BEACH — If you go to Aruba, you must dine on the beach, toes in the sand, loved one on the side and culinary treats in front of you paired with some bubbles. Unforgettable, that's what you are ...Nat King Cole said it best. The title of the song applies to your partner, the setting on Manchebo Resort's beach and the food of famous Chef Sandro. Welcome to 'Dinner under the Stars' featuring you and her/him.

Escaping the cold weather to go find your tropical paradise is a wonderful thing to do. While mind mapping of this



event, you include a romantic dinner on the beach, as you have seen it in multiple prospects of remote beaches, yes, that is what you want. On Aruba you may choose from different options but why not go for the number one beach; one of the best ones in the world: Eagle Beach.

Ike's Bistro at Manchebo Beach Resort & Spa set up an amazing dinner on the beach. Picture this: you and your loved one walking to a dinner table decorated with subtle lights, the waiter pampers you all night long and you gazing out over the Caribbean blue watching the beautiful sunset with a



sparkling wine in the hand. It all feels like the two of you alone in paradise. And this is only the beginning... Appetizers are named "Romance in a Bowl" presenting a marriage of fresh lettuces, crumbled goat cheese, roasted almonds, grilled mushroom and homemade raspberry vinaigrette or "Temptation of the Sea," a delicious well-filled seafood chowder served with crostini bread, micro greens, paprika aioli & basil foam. The "Love Bird" main course carries corn-fed, free-range chicken; broiled and generously filled with honey cured ham and melted Gouda cheese, served with grilled zucchini and yellow squash, radish salsa, al dente linguini pasta and saffron-white wine sauce. Second choice for the main course brings on "The loving Couple" serving an amazing Caribbean lobster tail broiled in lemon-herb butter till golden brown and perfectly grilled filet mignon, served with garlic baby potatoes, steamed veggies and rosemary demi-glace. There is a third winner called "The Love Boat," consisting of fresh grilled catch-of-the-day combined with jumbo green shell mussels, black tiger shrimp and calamari, served with mango-citrus quinoa, roasted red pepper and zucchini and white-wine-beurre blanc sauce. The love carries on in the dessert which is a Sweethearts of white chocolate Baileys mousse, fresh strawberries and hazelnut ice-cream. Coffee and tea close this wondrous feast.

The Romantic Dinner under the Stars is a special event and we strongly suggest you take advantage of this happening while it lasts. It is the whole spectrum in one night, all of the above including a bottle of bubbles for \$160 per couple (taxes not included). □

Call them at +297 582 3444 to reserve your table or contact them on Facebook: Ike's Bistro. Bon appetite!





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The crisis team explains Covid policy at the border

ORANJESTAD - After the Crisis Team announced the new border policy to prevent a possible spread of the Delta variant, they noticed some confusion about its implementation.

This regulation is related to the testing for travelers visiting from one of the higher risks countries. The measure reintroduced at the entry port at the airport by the Crisis Team is not entirely new.

The regulation is that all travelers, both residents as tourists, should prove a negative Covid test result, not older than 72 hours when entering Aruba. Travelers must upload the test results on the Aruba Health App

or undergo testing upon arrival at the airport. The difference is for the traveler itself. An uploaded negative test result gives the traveler immediate admission. The traveler who opted to get tested at the airport must wait at their hotel or home and in self-quarantine while waiting for the test result. The test result can take up to 24 hours. Travelers can proceed undisturbed with their vacation if their result is negative. If the test result is positive, the traveler must stay in isolation. The DVG and the ATA are in charge of this process.

To be clear, travelers arriving in Aruba should NOT automatically be quaran-

lined for 14 days. This policy was slightly adapted to make the entrance to Aruba easier for those vaccinated. The authorities in Aruba have opted to make this policy stricter again for everyone due to the current alarming situation of the Delta variant in many countries. This is in an attempt to keep the community safe and the economy from being affected again by this virus.

High-risk countries are:

Seychelles- Cyprus- Fiji- Mongolia- Tunisia- Namibia- United Kingdom- Colombia- Cuba- Kuwait- Argentina- Spain- Botswana- South Africa- Netherlands- Oman- Georgia- Costa

Rica- Portugal- Malaysia- Panama- Suriname- Andorra- Brazil- Maldives- Kyrgyzstan- Iran- Iraq- Luxembourg- Libya- Paraguay- Greece- Uruguay- Russia- Kazakhstan- Malta- United Arab Emirates- Chile- Saint

Kitts & Nevis- Monaco- Indonesia- Zimbabwe- Guatemala- Bahamas- Trinidad & Tobago- Ireland- Denmark.

For more information go to www.arubacovid19.org.

ULTIMO INFORMACION

Casos de Corona Virus na Aruba
22 di Juli 2021
Select English Below

22/7/2021	TOTAL	RESIDENTS	NON-RESIDENTS
New Cases	21	12	9
Active	130	65	65
Recovered	11054	10150	904
Positive	11293	10323	970
Deaths	109	108	1

Birds of Aruba

On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation also focusses on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following picture and description from the foundations Facebook page.

Freedom

A little girl flying with the gulls.
Manifesting her inner child.
She is one with Pachimama.
So much beauty in Aruba's wildlife.
Aruba's to protect. Aruba's to enjoy. □

Aruba to us is truly our second home

You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

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to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today's newspaper we received a great picture from Nancy Lang from Haverhil. She wrote:

"Aruba to me is all the wonderful people that make your stay memorable to come back again and again." □

Nature and a healthy environment are essential for a healthy society



ORANJESTAD - On July 28, the world celebrates the International Day for the Conservation of Nature. This day is to raise awareness about protecting and preserving our natural resources.

There are many aspects that expose our nature to dangers, but fortunately more and more countries are recognizing this problem and are making changes. To protect future generations, a healthy environment is essential and every country has a responsibility to contribute to

this. The planet provides the basic necessities to ensure survival on Earth, such as water, air, food, plants and animals. Enough reason to keep our nature clean and healthy. One of the reasons people destroy nature is the construction of houses, buildings and roads to facilitate human life. While the need for housing is obvious and one must meet the demand of the population, it is important to balance it. Until now, there is no balance between the conservation of nature and the development of the land. This can lead to

more natural disasters and diseases. Aruba also contributes to the cause of sustainable development by implementing and enforcing laws that protect natural areas, banning environmentally unfriendly products, and continuously seeking options and alternatives to improve outdated processes that are no longer beneficial to the environment, such as waste management. Everyone can contribute by simply sharing information that is valuable to nature, avoiding the use of products that are harmful to the environ-

ment and appreciating our natural beauty without causing harm.

According to the Prime Minister of Aruba Evelyn Wever-Croes: "A balanced and sustainable development is good for everyone. We will continue to give meaningful content to the Sustainable Development

Goals and put greater emphasis on protecting our environment and creating opportunities in agriculture.

A healthy nature and environment are indispensable for a healthy society. I make a plea to every citizen, may we all continue to support and care for our nature, for a better development of our country" □



A special honoring worth emerald

PALM BEACH — Recently, Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as a Goodwill Ambassador and an Emerald Ambassador of Aruba! The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively. The Emerald Ambassador certificate is presented to guests who visit Aruba 35 years and more consecutively.

The honorees were **Mr. Xe McAndrew** and **Mrs. Christine Mazza** from USA!

McAndrew has been visiting the island for 41 years consecutively. The ceremony was one of importance to us because honoring visitors who have been coming to Aruba for over 35 years is incredibly rare and it was a very memorable moment for all of us.

Mazza has been visiting us for over 25 years consecutively. It is beautiful to see that Aruba has so many loyal visitors after so many years and we would like to thank you all once again from the bottom of our hearts!

This lovely couple stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, and Aruba's warm and friendly people whom have become like family to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Marriott Aruba Ocean Club presented the certificate to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □

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Extend your experience to an 80-minute treatment for \$100 per couple.
*Offer cannot be combined with any other discounts or promotions.

Amazon's mission: Getting a 'key' to your apartment building

By JOSEPH PISANI

AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Amazon is tired of ringing doorbells. The online shopping giant is pushing landlords around the country — sometimes with financial incentives — to give its drivers the ability to unlock apartment-building doors themselves with a mobile device.

The service, dubbed Key for Business, is pitched as a way to cut down on stolen packages by making it easy to leave them in lobbies and not outside. Amazon benefits because it enables delivery workers to make their rounds faster. And fewer stolen packages reduce costs and could give Amazon an edge over competitors.

Those who have installed the device say it reduces the constant buzzing by delivery people and is a safer alternative to giving out codes to scores of delivery people.

But the Amazon program, first announced in 2018, may stir security and privacy concerns as it gains traction. The company said that it does background checks on delivery people and that they can unlock doors only when they have a package in hand to scan. But tenants may not know that Amazon drivers have access to their building's front doors, since Amazon



Jason Goldberg, chief commerce strategy officer at marketing company Publicis Communications, points out the blue sticker with the Amazon logo on the buzzer system in his apartment building on Monday, March 29, 2021, in Chicago.

leaves it up to the building to notify them.

Ashkan Soltani, a privacy researcher who was a senior tech advisor to former President Barack Obama, said that any device connected to the internet could be hacked, including the Amazon one, and bad actors could try to unlock the doors.

"You're essentially introducing a foreign internet-connected device into an otherwise internal network," said Soltani, who was also a former chief technologist at the U.S. Federal Trade

Commission.

Amazon didn't respond to questions about potential hacking.

The company has already installed the device in thousands of U.S. apartment buildings but declined to give a specific number. It sometimes leaves a clue, placing a round sticker with the Amazon smile logo on buzzers where the device has been installed. On one New York City street, the sticker was on three of 11 buildings. In another neighborhood, two of seven buildings had the sticker.

Amazon salespeople have been fanning out to cities across the country to knock on doors, make cold calls or approach building managers on the street to urge them to install the device. The company has even partnered with local locksmiths to push it on building managers while they fix locks. Amazon installs the device for free and sometimes throws in a \$100 Amazon gift card to whoever lets them in.

Amazon had better luck with Kenton Girard. A Chicago landlord, Girard

agreed to have the device installed in four of his buildings as a way to reduce package theft, which was getting so bad that he was considering building a package drop box outside. "I would have paid to have it done," Girard said of the Amazon device.

Currently, only the U.S. Postal Service has a way to enter apartment buildings in order to get to mailboxes. UPS says it has tested a way for its workers to enter buildings without buzzing tenants, teaming up with a smart-lock company in 2018. But that test ended, and UPS declined to say why. The company says customers can instead have their packages delivered to nearby grocery stores, dry cleaners or florists if they're not home.

FedEx declined to comment for this story.

Amazon has wanted to walk through people's front doors for years. In 2017, it launched a way for shoppers to let delivery people come in their home when they're not there and leave packages in the foyer. Walmart did the same shortly after, but its delivery people also stocked the fridge with groceries. Amazon and Walmart don't say how many people are using those services, but both have expanded them to more cities recently. □

Associated Press

Dutch data protection authority fines TikTok over privacy

THE HAGUE, Netherlands

(AP) — The Netherlands' Data Protection Authority said Thursday it has fined TikTok 750,000 euros (\$885,000) for not offering a privacy statement in Dutch, saying many children who use the popular video sharing app would be unable to understand the information.

The agency said that by not offering a Dutch-language privacy statement, "TikTok failed to provide an adequate explanation of how the app collects, processes and uses personal data."

It said TikTok has some 3.5

million users in the Netherlands and that Dutch pri-



This Feb. 25, 2020, file photo, shows the icon for TikTok in New York.

Associated Press

vacancy law is "based on the principle that people must always be given a clear idea of what is being done with their personal data." The data protection authority said TikTok had "lodged an objection to the fine." TikTok said in a statement that its privacy policy and a "shorter and more accessible version for our younger users, available in Dutch since July 2020, has been accepted by the Dutch Data Protection Authority as the solution to this issue." It added that it made other changes to safeguard the privacy of minors in the

past 18 months, including setting accounts of 13-to-15-year-olds to private by default and only allowing direct messaging for users 16 and over.

Last month, Dutch consumer group Consumentenbond said it was launching a 1.5 billion euro (\$1.8 billion) claim against TikTok over what it alleges is unlawful harvesting of personal data from users. The group and a foundation called Take Back Your Privacy demanded that TikTok pay damages to 1.2 million to 1.6 million Dutch children who use the app. □

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 45 Bygone

1 Ghana's auto capital

6 Monument Valley sights

11 Seasonal song

12 Unaided

13 Undermine

14 Dismay

15 Hot, in a way

17 Massage settings

18 In addition

20 Stable diet

22 Rented out

23 Self-defense art

26 "West Side Story"

heroin

28 Land units

29 Stretchy fabric

31 Really impress

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36 Yemen neighbor

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40 Put up

43 Bard's creation

44 Be of one mind

DOWN

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4 Western

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5 Baseball's

Rodriguez

6 Fuming

7 Waistband

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8 Mustaches,

in slang

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Siam

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heroin

28 Land units

29 Stretchy fabric

31 Really impress

32 Article

33 Overlook

34 Stamp sheet

36 Yemen neighbor

38 Operative

40 Put up

43 Bard's creation

44 Be of one mind

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P	U	L	S	E	S	C	E	N	T

Yesterday's answer

16 "Hey there!"	30 Punk rock offshoot
18 Some charity mom	33 Bart's mom
19 Bound	34 Make lots
21 Trojan War	35 Like
23 Green stone	37 Ham or lamb
24 Stitches	39 — Aviv
25 Calls on	41 Cartoon frame
27 Concentrated	42 Pot fill

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45						46			

7-23

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

7-23

CRYPTOQUOTE

MWFC IT SO TMMYO UCWU PM
WGM LSOU W BGIA RK UCM
IFMWK JSU UCM IFMWK
PISYB JM YMOO PRUCISU
UCWU NROORKV BGIA

— NIUCMG UMG MOW

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE FRIEND WHO HOLDS YOUR HAND AND SAYS THE WRONG THING IS MADE OF DEARER STUFF THAN THE ONE WHO STAYS AWAY. — BARBARA KINGSOLVER



In this Thursday, July 1, 2021 file photo, a wildfire burns in the mountains north of Lytton, British Columbia, Canada, during record high temperatures.

Associated Press

Study: Northwest heat wave impossible without climate change

By SETH BORENSTEIN
AP Science Writer

The deadly heat wave that roasted the Pacific Northwest and western Canada was virtually impossible without human-caused climate change that added a few extra degrees to the record-smashing temperatures, a new quick scientific analysis found. An international team of 27 scientists calculated that climate change increased chances of the extreme heat occurring by at least 150 times, but likely much more.

The study, not yet peer reviewed, said that before the industrial era, the region's late June triple-digit heat was the type that would not have happened in human civilization. And even in today's warming world, it said, the heat was a once-in-a-millennium event. But that once-in-a-millennium event would likely occur every five to 10 years once the world warms another 1.4 degrees (0.8 degrees Celsius), said Wednesday's study from World Weather Attribution. That much warming could be 40 or 50 years away if carbon pollution continues at its current pace, one study author said. This type of extreme heat "would go from essentially virtually impossible to relatively commonplace," said study co-author Gabriel Vecchi, a Princeton University climate scientist. "That is a huge change." The study also found that in the Pacific Northwest and Canada climate change was responsible for about 3.6 degrees (2 degrees Celsius) of the heat shock. Those few degrees make a big difference in human health, said study co-author Kristie Ebi, a professor at the Center for Health and the Global Environment at the University of Washington. "This study is telling us climate change is killing people," said Ebi, who endured the blistering heat in Seattle. She said it will be many months before a death toll can be calculated from June's blast of heat but it's likely to

be hundreds or thousands. "Heat is the No. 1 weather-related killer of Americans."

In Oregon alone, the state medical examiner on Wednesday reported 116 deaths related to the heat wave. The team of scientists used a well-established and credible method to search for climate change's role in extreme weather, according to the National Academy of Sciences. They logged observations of what happened and fed them into 21 computer models and ran numerous simulations. They then simulated a world without greenhouse gases from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas. The difference between the two scenarios is the climate change portion. "Without climate change this event would not have happened," said study senior author Friederike Otto, a climate scientist at the University of Oxford.

What made the Northwest heat wave so remarkable is how much hotter it was than old records and what climate models had predicted. Scientists say this hints that some kind of larger climate shift could be in play and in places that they didn't expect. "Everybody is really worried about the implications of this event," said study co-author Geert Jan van Oldenborgh, a Dutch climate scientist. "This is something that nobody saw coming, that nobody thought possible. And we feel that we do not understand heat waves as well as we thought we did. The big question for many people is: Could this also happen in a lot of places?" The World Weather Attribution team does these quick analyses, which later get published in peer-reviewed journals. In the past, they have found similar large climate change effects in many heat waves, including ones in Europe and Siberia. But sometimes the team finds climate change wasn't a factor, as they did in a Brazilian drought and a heat wave in India. □



In this Saturday, April 24, 2021 file photo, a university graduate student holds a female blue jay in her open hand to release it in Silver Spring, Md., after removing it from a mist net used to capture birds for banding or other research projects.

Associated Press

EXPLAINER: What's making mid-Atlantic songbirds sick?

By CHRISTINA LARSON
WASHINGTON (AP) — A mysterious ailment has sickened and killed thousands of songbirds in several mid-Atlantic states since late spring. While scientists are still racing to confirm the cause, it seems juvenile birds may be most susceptible. The U.S. Geological Survey, which oversees responses to some natural hazards and risks, has recommended that people temporarily take down bird feeders and clean out bird baths to reduce places that birds could closely congregate and potentially spread disease.

WHICH BIRDS ARE AFFECTED?

So far the majority of birds reported as ailing have been fledgling blue jays, American robins, European starlings and common grackles, but other songbirds are also affected.

The main visible symptoms are swollen eyes or crusty discharge around the eyes, as well as off-balance movements that may indicate neurological damage.

WHERE ARE BIRDS GETTING SICK?

Wildlife managers and veterinarians first received reports in late April and May of sick birds in Maryland,

Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky and Washington, D.C. More recent reports have come from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Ohio and Indiana. The outbreak may have peaked in June and be declining in some early hotspots, but it's ongoing in other regions, according to Brian Evans, a bird ecologist at the Smithsonian National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute.

WHAT'S CAUSING THE SICKNESS?

Scientists at the USGS, the Smithsonian and universities are still working to determine the causes. Through testing of sick and deceased birds, they have determined that this outbreak was not primarily caused by salmonella, chlamydia, avian influenza virus, West Nile virus or a few other viruses that commonly afflict birds.

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

USGS is recommending that people remove backyard bird feeders, avoid handling sick birds and keep pets away from birds. The agency also recommends that people with bird baths disinfect them with a solution of 10% bleach and 90% water.

"Because we don't know what it is, we have to be

that much more vigilant. We still don't know if it's caused by a virus or a bacteria" or a toxic chemical in pesticides, said Jordan Rutter, director of public relations at the American Bird Conservancy, a non-profit group.

However, removing bird feeders doesn't have to mean ignoring the needs of birds. Rutter suggested that people with yards could incorporate native plants that provide food, such as berries and nectar, while also attracting insects birds eat. □

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'Snake Eyes' doesn't play its cards right

By **LINDSEY BAHR**

AP Film Writer

Henry Golding has undeniable screen presence. He's handsome, sure. Lots of actors are. But Golding also has that effortless charisma that the biggest movie stars possess. It's no wonder that he was catapulted from relative, travel show host obscurity to film fame with just one role in "Crazy Rich Asians" and that his name often pops up as a fan choice for the next James Bond. If the powers in Hollywood don't mess it up, he's going to be around for quite some time.

It's also not surprising that the industry would capitalize on his breakthrough moment and come knocking with some piece of Intellectual Property for him to star in. Unfortunately that IP piece is "Snake Eyes," an origin story about a G.I. Joe character that completely misunderstands its star's appeal. Golding is simply not the right actor for the part. He's not exactly bad, just miscast and misused. And despite the novel trimmings and flash around him, his character is woefully generic.

"Snake Eyes" has some things going for it. For one, the names Cobra and G.I. Joe aren't even uttered for almost an hour. Credited screenwriters Evan Spiliotopoulos, Anna Waterhouse and Joe Shrapnel seem to have some understanding



This image released by Paramount Pictures shows Henry Golding in a scene from "Snake Eyes: G.I. Joe Origins."

that a mere G.I. Joe association isn't enough to get regular moviegoers into theaters. And after seeing Atlanta and Vancouver destroyed over and over again in superhero films it is a breath of fresh air to be transported to Tokyo, where director Robert Schwentke (RED, R.I.P.D.) makes sure to lovingly shoot both the neon and the ancient. He even takes our burgeoning hero to the Golden Gai and creatively utilizes the tiny alleyways for a fun fight.

In fact, if you can make it to the Tokyo section, which takes almost a half hour

to get to, you'll be in for a fairly fun ride as Snake Eyes starts to train with an ancient Japanese clan called the Arashikage. In the unnecessarily dull first part, we learn that Snake Eyes' father was murdered in front of him when he was a boy, he's spent his life since as a loner living on the streets and stuffing fish with weapons for the Yakuza and he also saves the life of the Arashikage heir, Tommy (Andrew Koji).

Is he just naturally a good fighter? Did he have training? You won't learn that answer in "Snake Eyes," but pretty soon both the Arashi-

kage and another well-established crime syndicate are using him as their go-to muscle and brains. In other words, his ascent through these established ranks is alarmingly swift.

This backstory also requires Golding to affect an unrefined American accent, which is a stretch and a mistake. His "ain't" doesn't sound like any "ain't" you've ever heard before. That can be forgiven though, he's not the first Brit to be in over his head in that regard. The true sin is that Snake Eyes as a character is so deathly dull. He barely has a personality. He

is purely driven by revenge and also doesn't seem to have to work all that hard at anything.

It's frustrating because he's actually surrounded by some fairly interesting characters, like the naive but arrogant Tommy, who is desperate for his grandmother's approval (Eri Ishida plays Sen, who leads the clan). And there's Akiko too, played by Haruka Abe, who is not a blood relation in the clan but has risen through skill and grit to become one of the trusted inner circle. Either of these women's stories would have been more interesting to focus on and hopefully we'll be seeing Abe on screen again soon.

The IP comes around to take over the story eventually and we meet a Cobra agent Úrsula Corberó's Baroness, and a "Joe," Scarlett, played by Samara Weaving who as usual does wonders with a no expectations role. Although, like many toy-based movies, "Snake Eyes" might be betting too much on audiences caring about the connections to a broader universe of Joes more than the story in front of them.

"Snake Eyes," a Paramount Pictures release in theaters Friday, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for, "sequences of strong violence, brief strong language." Running time: 122 minutes. □

Associated Press

'We're back on the road!' Rolling Stones relaunch U.S. tour

By **The Associated Press**
NEW YORK (AP) — Time is finally on their side.

The Rolling Stones announced on Thursday the relaunch of their U.S. "No Filter" tour, which had been derailed by the pandemic, beginning in St. Louis on Sept. 26.

"I'm so excited to get back on the stage again and want to thank everyone for their patience," frontman Mick Jagger said in a statement. "See you soon!"

Added Keith Richards:

"We're back on the road! See you there!"

The 2021 No Filter tour begins Sept. 26 at The Dome at America's Center in St. Louis, followed by rescheduled stops in Charlotte, Pittsburgh, Nashville, Minneapolis, Tampa, Dallas, Atlanta, Detroit and Austin. The band has also added three new dates, including the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival their first time playing there on Oct. 13, Los Angeles on Oct. 17 at SoFi Stadium, and Las Vegas on Nov. 6

at Allegiant Stadium.

Tickets will go on sale July 30 for the new shows. The statement added that previously scheduled dates for Vancouver, Louisville, Cleveland and Buffalo could not be rescheduled; ticketholders will be contacted by Ticketmaster. All previously purchased tickets will be honored at the rescheduled performances.

Further information is available on www.rollingstones.com. □



In this Aug. 22, 2019 file photo, Mick Jagger, center, performs with his Rolling Stones bandmates, from left, Ron Wood, Charlie Watts and Keith Richards during their concert at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif.

Associated Press

Olympic scandals march on long after torch goes out

By EDDIE PELLIS

AP National Writer

TOKYO (AP) — From doping to demonstrations to dirty officials, the Olympics have never lacked their share of off-the-field scandals and controversies that keep the Games in the headlines long after the torch goes out. The five-year gap since the last Summer Olympics has been no different. A brief look at some of the most notable news to hit the Olympic world since it last convened for the Summer Games:

SEX ABUSE Larry Nassar's sexual abuse of hundreds of gymnasts in the U.S. opened a window into an abusive culture that permeates throughout the sport and in all corners of the globe.

Since Rio de Janeiro, the U.S. Center for SafeSport opened to investigate complaints about abuse in sports. It took the decision-making process of these cases out of the hands of organizations such as USA Gymnastics, which for years had been forced to pit members (gymnasts) against members (coaches) when abuse allegations arose. Other abuse



In this June 19, 2021, photo, Sha'Carri Richardson celebrates after winning the first heat of the semis finals in women's 100-meter run at the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials in Eugene, Ore. Associated Press

allegations in taekwondo, water polo and figure skating were among those that came to light in the United States, and the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee rewrote its own by-laws to, in part, prioritize the mental and physical well-being of its athletes instead of the chase for Olympic medals.

RUSSIA DOPING In Rio, the IOC rejected a World Anti-

Doping Agency recommendation to ban all Russian competitors from the Olympics as punishment for a wide-ranging scheme the country designed to help its athletes dope without getting caught. As a result, around 270 Russians were permitted to compete in 2016. Possibly emboldened by the IOC move,

Russia continued to cover

up its misdeeds. In 2019, WADA investigators determined that Russia had manipulated 23 gigabytes of data that could have been used to pursue cases related to the original cheating. WADA suggested a four-year ban with heavy restrictions on which Russians could compete, but the Court of Arbitration for Sport watered it down. The end result: Some 335 Rus-

sian athletes will compete in Tokyo, though not wearing team uniforms and not under the Russian flag. They officially will be competing as members of the "ROC," or Russian Olympic Committee. Only 10 of those athletes will be in track and field; that sport's governing body, whose former leaders enabled some of the cheating (see below), has since taken a much harder stance on the Russia case than most.

DOPING RULES A spotlight shined on anti-doping rules that call on athletes to submit their whereabouts so they can be subjected to testing without notice. Reigning Olympic champions Christian Coleman and Brianna McNeal and world champion Salwa Eid Naser are among those missing the Olympics after being banned for violations of this rule. ... And only weeks before the start of the Olympics, the ban of American sprinter Sha'Carri Richardson for a positive marijuana test fueled a debate about whether that drug not considered a performance enhancer and legal in some parts of the globe should be forbidden anymore. □

Drive for 5: Castroneves to chase 5th Indy 500 with MSR

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — Helio Castroneves will race for a record fifth Indianap-

olis 500 in 2022 with Meyer Shank Racing. Castroneves, who won his



Helio Castroneves of Brazil, winner of the 2021 Indianapolis 500 auto race, poses during the traditional winners photo session at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indianapolis, in this Monday, May 31, 2021, file photo.

Associated Press

record-tying fourth Indy 500 in May, has agreed to a full season ride with Meyer Shank. Castroneves only has a partial schedule this season with Meyer Shank and has not raced since he joined A.J. Foyt, Al Unser Sr. and Rick Mears, his former mentor at Team Penske, as the only four-time winners of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing." He's next scheduled to race in August at Nashville. He'll drive the No. 06 Honda in 2022.

"I am thrilled to get the chance to go for a fifth Indianapolis 500 win, and so excited to fight for the IndyCar championship again with a full season of races next year with Meyer Shank Racing," Castroneves said.

MSR plans to add a second driver to its 2022 slate.

The team will move on from current driver Jack Harvey.

"We wish Jack much success and we know he will continue to be a driver to watch," MSR co-owner Mike Shank said.

"MSR is excited to have Helio on the 06 car next season and we're looking forward to adding a driver, who will turn heads in the 60 car."

Castroneves joined the other four-time Indy 500-winning drivers this week for a celebration at Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The foursome chatted at a table in the pagoda before they flashed their Indy 500 rings and smiled during a group photo with the imposing Borg-Warner Trophy on the Brickyard.

Castroneves is also sched-

uled this season to drive for MSR on the Indianapolis road course, as well as at Portland, Laguna Seca and the season finale at Long Beach.

The 46-year-old Castroneves spent two decades driving for Roger Penske but was moved over to the sports car program in 2018 and then cut loose after winning the IMSA championship last season before Penske folded the team. He stayed busy this season driving for Tony Stewart's All-Star Superstar Racing Experience.

Castroneves had longed to return for a full-season ride in IndyCar and said he had a lot left in the tank. He'll get the chance next year to set the Indy 500 record and drive for that coveted first series championship in 2022. □

Seattle Kraken sets first roster, will open season at Vegas

By **TIM BOOTH**
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — What the expansion draft of the Seattle Kraken lacked in drama it made up for with quirks, production and a giant party to celebrate one of the biggest steps in the launch of the NHL's newest team.

"I envisioned this a lot of different ways and this is unbelievable," Seattle coach Dave Hakstol said. "All the boats on the lake behind us, the scene on the other side of the stage. It's awesome."

Any unknowns about Seattle's selections evaporated when all 30 names leaked hours before the team announced its selections on the shore of Lake Union. It was still a celebratory night to introduce the nucleus of a team that will make its debut at Vegas in a matchup of the league's two newest teams in mid-October and play its first home game on Oct. 23 against rival Vancouver.

One pick was announced by an octopus from the Seattle Aquarium. Another came written on a fish thrown in the city's legendary Pike Place Market. And there was an assembly line of Seattle sports celebrities taking part, from Sue Bird to Marshawn Lynch.

Fans on all types of aquatic devices — paddleboards, kayaks and all sizes of



New Seattle Kraken NHL hockey players, back row from left, Mark Giordano, Brandon Tanev, Jamie Oleksiak, Hadyn Fluery, Jordan Eberle and Chris Dreidger stand on stage with Kraken owners David Wright, front left, Jerry Bruckheimer, front center, and Andy Jassy, front second from right, and Kraken general manager Ron Francis, front right, Wednesday, July 21, 2021, after being introduced during the Kraken's expansion draft event in Seattle. Jassy is also president and CEO of Amazon.com.

Associated Press

boats created a flotilla traffic jam on Lake Union. There were giant inflatable octopuses, makeshift Stanley Cups and when Gary Bettman appeared next to the shore, he was soundly booed as all commissioners are.

"It proves you're true hockey fans," Bettman said to the group on the water, leading to chants of "Gary, Gary, Gary!"

It was clear that flexibility with the salary cap was one of Seattle's biggest priorities in setting its first roster.

Of the 30 players selected, Seattle committed only \$54 million of a possible \$81.5 million, not including a few restricted free agents who will push the number closer to \$60 million should they stay.

The side deals and trades that Vegas fleeced the league with four years ago were absent this time around. Vegas announced 10 trades during its expansion draft; Seattle, zero.

"Last time around (with Vegas), teams were paying a price to stay away

from guys. This time, they weren't willing to do that because GMs learned," Seattle general manager Ron Francis said. "What they were looking to do is get us to take bad money or bad contracts in order to leave somebody exposed and for us we think (cap space) was the most valuable thing asset we had right now, especially in potentially a flat cap environment for a year or two." Defense was clearly a priority for Seattle, whether to build its own depth or

for the opportunity to flip players for other options. A few seem locks to stay, like Adam Larsson and Jamie Oleksiak, both unrestricted free agents who signed long-term deals with Seattle.

Larsson got a \$16 million, four-year deal and Oleksiak got \$23 million over five years.

Veteran Mark Giordano from Calgary was thought to be a possible option for flipping, but seemed unlikely when he walked on stage and pulled on the Kraken home jersey.

Giordano, 37, has the biggest cap hit of any player taken but could soon wear the captain's "C" when they open their inaugural season. As far as other players selected, the Kraken got their goaltender in late-blooming Chris Driedger, and veteran forwards Jordan Eberle and Jared McCann. Seattle took Tampa Bay forward Yanni Gourde but he will miss at least the first month of the season following shoulder surgery. Seattle passed on big-money goaltender Carey Price, who was fresh off backstopping Montreal to the Stanley Cup Final, choosing instead to sign Driedger to a \$10.5 million, three-year contract. The 33-year-old Price has a cap hit of \$10.5 million annually and a questionable injury history. □

Refugee defector from Iran to face Iranian at Tokyo Olympics

TOKYO (AP) — A defector from Iran who competes in taekwondo for the refugee team at the Tokyo Olympics was drawn on Thursday to face an Iranian opponent in the qualifying round.

Kimia Alizadeh, who left Iran citing institutional sexism, will face Nahid Kiyani Chande in the 57-kilo-gram class on Sunday.

Alizadeh was the first Iranian woman to win an Olympic medal when she took bronze at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games when she

was 18. She later criticized wearing the mandatory hijab headscarf, which she had to wear in Rio, and left Iran to live in Germany. "I have a great feeling to have made a decision for my life that would definitely change my future," she said last year in Germany. Alizadeh was selected for the 29-athlete Refugee Olympic Team last month. The two-time world champion medalist and 2014 Youth Olympics champion needed an invitation to join the 16 athletes

who qualified for the 57kg featherweight category at the Tokyo Games.

The extra entry made an odd-numbered lineup, requiring a qualifying round to advance to the main bracket. The draw landed Alizadeh against an opponent from her former country.

The winner at the Makuhari Messe near Tokyo will advance to the round of 16 and face defending champion Jade Jones of Britain less than two hours later. □



In this Aug. 18, 2016 file photo, Kimia Alizadeh Zenoorn of Iran celebrates after winning the bronze medal in a women's Taekwondo 57-kg competition at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Associated Press